

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-07 IGA-02 AID-05 OES-06 EB-08 COME-00 /084 W
-----161722Z 110881 /47

R 161247Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3931

INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

SECDEF WASHDC

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 2431

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MILE, EC

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR TRANSFER OF DESTROYERS TO ECUADOR

REF: A) 76 QUITO 2228 B) USCINCSO MSG 292337Z MAR 76

C) 76 QUITO 7593 D) QUITO 2438

1. FOR AT LEAST THREE YEARS WE HAVE BEEN ENTERTAINING A REQUEST FROM THE EUCADOREAN NAVY (EN) FOR THE TRANSFER OF ONE OR TWO OVERAGE DESTROYERS ON A "HOT SHIP" TRANSFER BASIS. THE DISPOSITION OF THE US TO PROVIDE THE VESSELS HAS WAXED AND WANED OWING TO CIRCUMSTANCES DURING THIS PERIOD, AND THE EN IS STILL WAITING. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, WHICH I WILL ADDRESS BELOW, I BELIEVE THAT THE TIME IS NOW APPROPRIATE TO COMMENCE FORMAL PROCEDURES TO EFFECT THE TRANSFERS, AND I THUS STRONGLY RECOMMEND. I HAVE SPELLED OUT THE BASIC POLITICAL ARGUMENTS FOR ADOPTING A COOPERATIVE POLICY TOWARD ECUADOR'S SECURITY NEEDS IN REF D, SOME OF WHICH ARE ALLUED TO IN PARA 5 BELOW.

2. BACKGROUND. EN SOUNED OUT THE US ON THE POSSIBILITY OF TWO DD OR DE TRANSFERS AS EARLY AS FEBRUARY 1974. US
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NAVY ECNCOURAGED THE EN TO BELIEVE THAT AT LEAST ONE SHIP WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. OF SPECIFIC NOTE IN THIS REGARD ARE WRITTEN PROMISES FROM TWO CNO'S CONTAINED IN ADMIRAL ZUMWALT'S LETTER DATED APRIL 6, 1974, AND ADMIRAL HOLLOWAY'S LETTER OF AUGUST 21, 1974 TO THE FORMER COMMANDER OF EN. THE FORMER COMMUNICATION OFFERED ONE "HOT SHIP" AND ONE MOTHBALL FOR FY 1976 WHILE THE LATTER OFFERED ONE "HOT

SHIP" DESTROYER IN 1976 AND PROMISED EVERY CONSIDERATION FOR A SECOND "HOT SHIP" TRANSFER IN FY 77. (COPIES OF BOTH LETTERS BEING POUCHED TO ARA/AND/E).

3. IN JANUARY 1975 FOUR AMERICAN TUNABOATS WERE SEIZED IN ECUADOREAN CLAIMED WATERS FOR FISHING WITHOUT A LICENSE, AND A LINKAGE BETWEEN FISHING AND NAVAL TRANSFERS WAS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED WHEN THE GEARING CLASS FRAM I DESTROYER PROGRAMMED FOR ECUADOR IN FY 76 WAS GIVEN TO ANOTHER COUNTRY, AND WHEN THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DISAPPROVED THE PROPOSED SALE OF AN LST WHICH HAD ALSO BEEN OFFERED TO ECUADOR. THAT LINKAGE WAS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE THEN NEWLY-APPOINTED EN COMMANDER ADMIRAL POVEDA DURING A CALL ON FORMER AMBASSADOR BREWSTER IN JUNE 1975. POVEDA EXPRESSED HIS DETERMINATION TO TURN AROUND THE CLIMATE OF US OPINION ON THIS MATTER AND WAS WILLING TO WAIT FOR THE DESTROYERS UNTIL ECUADOR WAS IN A MORE FAVORABLE POSITION. AT THE END OF THE 1976 FISHING SEASON WHEN OVER A HUNDRED US BOATS FISHED WITHOUT HARRASSMENT BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES, POVEDA (WHO BY THAT TIME HAD ASCENDED TO THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF THE THREE-MAN JUNTA WHICH DEPOSED GENERAL RODRIGUEZ LARA) APPARENTLY FELT THAT ECUADOR'S RECORD ON THE FISHING PROBLEM WAS SUFFICIENTLY CLEAN TO RENEW THE REQUEST FOR DESTROYERS, WHICH HE DID IN A LETTER OF MARCH 9, 1976.

4. PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE 1977 FISHING SEASON, POVEDA TOOK A PERSONAL AND DECISIVE INTEREST IN IRONING OUT POTENTIAL BUREAUCRATIC PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN HARRASSMENT OF US TUNABOATS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE CUT THROUGH RED TAPE TO ESTABLISH

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A SYSTEM OF ALLOWING US SHIPS TO OBTAIN LICENSES BY RADIO. AND, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE USG HAD MET ECUADOR HALF-WAY BY MOVING TO A NEUTRAL POLICY ON THE QUESTION OF LICENCES, HE IMBUED HIS SUBORDINATES IN THE NAVY AND IN THE BUREAUCRACY WITH THE PRINCIPLE THAT INCIDENTS WITH AMERICAN VESSELS OUGHT TO BE AVOIDED IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. ENCOURAGED BY THE APPROVAL OF THE LST WHICH WAS A DIRECT RESULT OF MY PERSONAL INTERVENTION WITH THE US TUNABOAT ASSOCIATION AND REP. WILSON AND CONFIDENT THAT THE POSSIBILITIES OF INCIDENTS HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A MINIMUM, POVEDA SENT A FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO ME DATED DEC. 10, 1976 IN WHICH HE REITERATED HIS FORMAL REQUEST FOR TWO "HOT-SHIP" DESTROYER TRANSFERS. OWING TO ECOLOGICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THE TUNA HAVE NOT APPEARED IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES OFF ECUADOR THUS FAR AS THE NORMAL FISHING SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE. POVEDA'S FISHING POLICIES WERE THEREFORE NOT PUT TO THE TEST THIS YEAR. THERE IS NO REASON, HOWEVER, TO DOUBT HIS GOOD FAITH IN THIS MATTER, AND IN ANY EVENT WE HAVE NOW GONE THROUGH TWO STRAIGHT FISHING SEASONS WITHOUT A SEIZURE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 2431

5. I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD, WHILE THE EN HAS ASSUMED THAT THE DESTROYER TRANSFERS WERE CONNECTED WITH FISHING, NEITHER I NOR MY STAFF MADE ANY EXPLICIT PROMISES ON THIS SCORE. ON THE OTHER HAND, NEITHER DID WE SPECIFICALLY DISABUSE GOE OFFICIALS IN THEIR BELIEF THAT THE LINKAGE EXISTED. THE GOE'S ASSUMPTION THAT THERE WAS A CONNECTION WAS PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE SUCCESSES WE HAVE ACHIEVED HERE, NOT ONLY IN FISHING, BUT BECAUSE OF THE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US WHICH THE EXPECTATION (AS WELL AS THE ACTUAL PROMISED DELIVERY OF THE LST) ENGENDERED, IN OTHER AREAS, (E.G., PROTECTION OF US INVESTMENT) AS WELL. I THINK THAT THE RECORD WILL SUPPORT A CONCLUSION THAT THE USG HAS SOMETHING OF A MORAL COMMITMENT TO PRODUCE ON THIS MATTER AND THAT WE WILL HAVE A PROBLEM OF CREDIBILITY IF WE DO NOT.

6. EN EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE DESTROYERS WERE FURTHER WHETTED DURING THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON LAST MONTH OF VICE ADMIRAL RENAN OLMEDO, CHIEF OF THE COMBINTED ARMED FORCES STAFF. I UNDERSTAND THAT OLMEDO CAME AWAY FROM HIS INTERVIEW WITH DOD DEPSEC DUNCAN WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE DESTROYER TRANSFERS WERE BEING ACTIVELY CONSIDERED. THIS MAY HAVE
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BEEN THE NEAREST TO A TANGIBLE THING THAT THE GOE MISSION BELIEVES IT GOT OUT OF THE TRIP AND THEY WOULD BE SEVERELY DISAPPOINTED IF THERE WAS NO FOLLOWUP.

7. DURING MY OWN CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON LAST MONTH, I LEARNED IN DOD THAT THE NAVY COULD MAKE AVAILABLE NOW REPEAT NOW ONE FRAM I DD FOR TRANSFER TO ECUADOR. THE ONLY QUESTION WOULD BE THE REACTION THE SEAPOWER SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICE COMMITTEE. THE SAME WEEK I SPOKE WITH REPRESENTATIVE BOB WILSON OF THE COMMITTEE. WILSON THOUGHT THAT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE OBJECTION TO THE TRANSFER IF THERE HAD BEEN NO TUNABOAT SEIZURES THIS SEASON, AND FURTHER COMMENTED THAT BOTH CONGRESS AND TUNABOAT ASSOCIATION UNDERSTOOD THAT ECUADOR DID NOT NEED DESTROYERS TO SEIZE TUNABOATS. I BELIEVE THAT WILSON AND THE FISHERMEN, WHOSE ACQUIESCENCE ALLOWED THE RELEASE OF THE LST, ARE AWARE OF THE FAVORABLE IMPACT OF THAT TRANSFER AND ALSO APPRECIATE THE STAKE OF US FISHING INTERESTS IN THE DESTROYER TRANSFERS.

8. I BELIEVE THAT THE REFERENCES SPREAD OVER THE PAST YEARS GIVE MORE THAN AMPLE TECHNICAL, POLITICAL, AND STRATEGIC JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TRANSFERS, AND NEED NO FURTHER EXEGESIS HERE. I DO WANT TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE KFIR VETO, BECAUSE OF OUR INABILITY TO GIVE ANSWERS ON AIR DEFENSE REQUESTS, AND THE SPECTRE OF SOVIET ARMS TRANSFERS HERE, IT BEHOOVES US TO ACT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO OFFER A MAJOR DEFENSE ITEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SINCE AT LEAST ONE SHIP IS AVAILABLE, AND SINCE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION WOULD SEEM TO BE MUTED, I REITERATE MY RECOMMENDATION THAT WE PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO GET THE SHIPS.
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Message Attributes

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